

Angola

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Freedom of the Press

Media in Angola operate in a restrictive environment, and conditions deteriorated once again in 2013, with intimidation and arrests of journalists and new legal measures designed to curb freedom of the press. State-run media continued to be the principal source of information, as the government maintained tight control over private outlets through legal, political, and security-related means. Restrictions remain more severe in the restive northern province of Cabinda, where a separatist movement is active.

Laws regarding state security and insult hamper the free activities of the media. In 2010, the parliament passed a new state security law to replace a 1978 law, known as Article 26, which the government often used to imprison opposition journalists and activists. While the new law represents an improvement, it still allows for the detention of persons who “insult” the Republic of Angola or the president in “public meetings or by disseminating words, images, writings, or sound.” Defamation and libel are crimes punishable by imprisonment, and politicians enjoy immunity from any reporting deemed to be “offensive.” In 2013, the government introduced a new draft criminal code that would further restrict freedom of expression by broadening the scope of what is considered criminal defamation and insult and retaining imprisonment as a punishment.

The government has used these laws to harass members of the independent media, with journalists William Tonet and Rafael Marques de Morais facing regular pressure for their efforts to expose corruption and human rights violations. In November 2012, nine generals filed a criminal defamation complaint in Portugal against Marques and his publisher, Tinta da China, for his 2011 book *Blood Diamonds: Corruption and Torture in Angola*, in which he accused several military officers of engaging in torture and other human rights violations in collusion with private mining companies. In February 2013, a Portuguese prosecutor threw out the case, stating that Marques’s intention was “clearly not to offend but to inform.” The plaintiffs are now pursuing a civil libel lawsuit in Portugal against Marques, seeking damages of \$390,000. Meanwhile, new lawsuits and a criminal defamation complaint were filed in Angola in 2013, but Marques and his attorney were prevented from accessing the full complaint. The journalist was also the target of multiple cyberattacks earlier in the year. Marques had attempted to bring a criminal complaint against the generals, but the case was thrown out by the attorney general in 2012. Separately, the government in July 2013 charged two bloggers and activists, José Gama and Lucas Pedro Fenguele, with abuse of press freedom, defamation, and slander against senior public officials for stories published on the website Club-K. The site, which is hosted outside Angola, often features articles that are critical of the government. None of the cases had been resolved at the end of 2013.

In March 2011, the government introduced a cybercrime bill that would have expanded the authorities’ ability to seize citizens’ personal data and prosecute those who make antigovernment statements online. The bill won initial approval in the parliament, but in the face international pressure and objections from civil society, the government later withdrew it.

Angola became one of the first African countries to enact a freedom of information law in 2006, granting citizens access to government-generated documents. However, accessing information remains extremely difficult in practice.

Since gaining independence in 1975, Angola has been dominated by two political parties, President José

Eduardo dos Santos's Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) and the opposition National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA). The ruling MPLA continues to give preferential treatment to state-owned media and has been known to bar access to journalists covering opposition events. Interviews with top politicians and state officials, as well as access to information related to the government, are usually granted only to progovernment or state-run outlets, and state media often demand payment to cover opposition activities.

The president and certain ministries have the right to censor media content. In one instance of censorship, an interview with dissident journalist Domingos da Cruz was kept out of the privately owned weekly *Novo Jornal* in November 2013. Self-censorship by journalists at both state-run and private outlets is commonplace in the coercive environment created by the government and security forces, and has even extended to Portugal, where oil wealth has allowed large Angolan investments in media and other companies. In 2013, evidence emerged that the government was coercing detained protesters into issuing statements of guilt for crimes on state television and seeking to both preempt and delegitimize antigovernment protests through negative and biased coverage in state media outlets.

Journalists continued to be harassed, intimidated, attacked, and imprisoned in 2013, especially for covering sensitive subjects like the antigovernment protests that occurred repeatedly throughout the year or widespread corruption among government officials. Voice of America journalist António Capalanda, who was assaulted and robbed of work materials in December 2012, remained a target of intimidation in 2013. He was repeatedly followed by unidentified men in early January, and his e-mail account was hacked during the same period. In September, three journalists—Marques, Voice of America correspondent Coque Mukuta, and Alexandre Neto, head of the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) in Angola—were arrested and beaten after attempting to interview young protesters who had just been released from detention. Marques suffered an injury to his neck, and one of his cameras was destroyed. The police told the journalists and several of the protesters, “You give us a lot of work. You deserve to be shot. You will die today.” The three journalists were freed by a court after five hours in detention. In a separate case, da Cruz was finally acquitted of inciting civil disobedience in a 2009 article on the grounds that there was no applicable law under which he could have been legally charged.

No journalists were known to have been murdered in 2013, though Luanda-based Guinea-Bissau journalist Milocas Pereira has been missing since mid-2012. In April she had reported on possible Angolan military involvement in a coup and related crises in Guinea-Bissau. She reportedly told a friend in May that she feared for her life after being attacked by a group of unknown people earlier that month, and that she was planning to leave the country.

The government both owns and keeps tight control over the largest media outlets in the country. The state-owned newspaper, *Jornal de Angola*, and television channel, Televisão Publica de Angola (TPA), remain the most widely accessed media sources, and together with state-owned Radio Nacional de Angola (RNA), they are the only outlets with a truly national reach. While more than a dozen privately owned newspapers operate, most are owned by individuals with connections to the government or ruling party, and are distributed primarily in urban areas. Nevertheless, several independent weeklies are critical of the government; *Folha 8*, *Agora*, and *Jornal Angolense* are the most prominent. Blogs such as Marques's *Maka Angola* and the news portal Club-K also report critically on the MPLA regime. Privately owned radio stations are not allowed to use repeaters to extend their broadcast signals outside their home province; they must instead open a new station in every province in which they wish to broadcast, making private radio penetration outside Luanda extremely limited. Internet penetration in Angola is rather low, at 19 percent of the population in 2013. Although the medium remains less restricted than radio, television, or print, it is generally only accessible to a small part of the population in Luanda.

Denial of state and private advertising as a method of pressuring independent news outlets continues to be

a problem. Some newspapers have reported sudden losses of revenue when multiple advertisers, presumably under government coercion, collectively stopped purchasing ad space. Authorities and private owners occasionally seize and destroy entire editions of newspapers that carry stories critical of the government.

2014 Scores

Press Status

Not Free

Press Freedom Score

(0 = best, 100 = worst)

69

Legal Environment

(0 = best, 30 = worst)

19

Political Environment

(0 = best, 40 = worst)

29

Economic Environment

(0 = best, 30 = worst)

21